

## Press Release

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### **Duke of Edinburgh's Awards Presented to Mississippi Youth Offenders**

(JACKSON, Miss.)—Today, two young men were presented the prestigious Duke of Edinburgh's Award by DofE President Emeritus Sam Haskell, Governor Phil Bryant and Mississippi Department of Human Services Executive Director Richard Berry. The youth earned the awards while under the custody of the state at Oakley Youth Development Center outside of Raymond. An additional five youth earned the award but were unable to attend the ceremony.

To earn a DofE Award, participants choose specific activities such as: Community Service, Special Skills, Physical Recreation and Adventurous Journey, and with the help of an activity coach, dedicate themselves to achieving program success. The Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards each require a successive degree of effort and determination over varying time periods.

In December 2012, Mississippi became the first state in the country to offer the program to young offenders and honored its first OYDC student with a DofE Award in October 2013.

"The DofE Award allows young people from all backgrounds to be connected in a way that no other international youth program can offer," said Sam Haskell, Board President Emeritus of the USA Award. "Our program at Oakley is making a difference and we are very thankful to Governor Bryant and Mr. Berry for their support."

"This is a proud day for our state," Governor Phil Bryant said. "Our goal is to build on Oakley's success with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award program through expanding outreach to more at-risk youth, and to share these best practices with other states across the country."

The mission of DofE is "to encourage all youth ages 14-24 to be the change they want to see in the world by inspiring them to grow and achieve." Program success is seen through:

- Increasing motivation which improves school attendance.
- Developing life skills and honoring personal achievement in non-academic settings.
- Building credible resumes in hopes of school acceptance and gaining employment.
- Encouraging young people to make positive life choices by reducing their vulnerability to drugs, crime, anti-social behavior, HIV/AIDS, and obesity.
- Instilling confidence and self-worth within every participant through fostering positive self-esteem in a fun, non-threatening atmosphere.
- Introducing youth to the world around them by making participants aware of their individual contributions and by showing how their efforts benefit other.

The DofE Award is one of the British Royal Family's principal charities for youth. Founded in 1956 by the Queen's husband, His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, the DofE Award is a self-development, recognition program available to youth ages 14 to 25. More than 8 million youth from more than 140 countries have earned their own Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards. The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award USA was launched in 2006 and currently operates in more than 40 states reaching nearly 10,000 participants annually.

For more information, go to: [www.dofeusa.org](http://www.dofeusa.org).

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